3.4 RESEARCH COMPANIES

What to Know

One of the most critical elements but least used job search "tools" is researching companies. Most applicants think it is difficult to get information, or simply fail to see the value of the effort.

Research is a good idea because:

1. You may get to know someone in the organization, and therefore have a personal contact.

2. If you have information about the company, you can do a better job of identifying transferable skills and matching those to the organization and the job.

3. You can ask questions in a job interview that are based on information few other applicants have.

Researching a company can make you "look better" when compared to other candidates, because so few applicants do their homework.

What to Do

The Internet is a critical element of successful job searching. Items you might want to research: company growth, city's average salaries for field, annual reports, cost of living.

For example, if you wanted to find the ABC Company's annual report for last year, you'd go to a search engine and do a "key word" search by typing in "ABC Company Annual Report." The search engine will then generate a list of links to webpages that contain the key words you specified. The list of webpages is usually sorted by relevance, meaning that the ones at the top of the list are probably most closely related to what you're looking for.

There are plenty of reference materials available in libraries to give you information on a company. You can do the research yourself or ask the librarian for help. A professional librarian is trained to find information from a variety of sources, or to direct you to other resources available in the community. Your local public library may also have a special Business Reference Section, which collects additional information on businesses in the local area. This information generally tends to be more current than annual publications. In any case, the Reference Desk at any library is a good starting point for your research.

After you have done research, you may then call the company to get additional information. You should call to ask for information for two reasons. First, to request printed material about the organization such as an annual report or brochure. Second, try to speak with someone about the job you want. Refer to section 2.1, "What to Say on the Phone."

Practice

The Company Information Record on the following page has space for information you might be able to find on a given company.

Create and prioritize a list of companies that interest you in order to research them.

As you research companies, keep a record of important information on the Company Information Record form. Use one page for each company. Keep this information organized and easily accessible. Copy one worksheet for each company you are researching. Refer to "What to Say on the Phone" in section 2.1.

Things to research before contacting a company:

1. Number of employees;

2. What the company does (service and/or products);

3. Business volume, net worth, profit and loss, company stability, etc. (see company's annual report if available);

4. Company competitors;

5. Company history and future plans;

6. Company locations (headquarters, branch offices, international offices, retail outlets, etc.);

7. Salary range or hourly rates paid for various positions;

8. Contact names (department heads, human resource manager, people you know who work there, former employees, etc.);

9. Employment activity (recent hiring, firing, layoffs, etc.); and

10. Titles of positions that interest you.

COMPANY INFORMATION RECORD

Date: _____

Company Name: _____

Contact Person's Name: _____

Contact Person's Title or Position: _____

Contact Person's E-mail Address: _____

Company Webpage: _____

Address: _____

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Phone #: _____

Position or Department of Interest: _____

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Required Skills, Credentials, Education, Work Experience: _____

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Remarks: _____

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JOB SEARCH LOG

Date	Company Name	Contact Name	Activity	Remarks	Follow-Up

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